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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000294

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AJ](#) [AM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#)

SUBJECT: MORE ON RAMBOUILLET FROM KOCHARIAN

REF: A. A) EVANS-MANN E-MAIL OF 2/24/06

[B. B\) YEREVAN 238](#)

[C. C\) MOSCOW 01934](#)

Classified By: Amb. John M. Evans, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In a private discussion February 28 with the Ambassador, President Kocharian did not rule out further talks on Nagorno-Karabakh, but dilated at some length on why he believed Rambouillet had been doomed to failure from the outset, and why he did not believe that Azeri President Aliyev was seriously seeking a negotiated solution. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) President Kocharian said he had received an invitation from MCC President John Danilovich to visit Washington and attend the signing of the MCA Compact on March 27, but added that he had no plans to do so.

[1](#)3. (C) Kocharian crabbled that, although the signing was an important event, he saw no point in going all that distance in order to stand by and watch the MCA Compact be signed by others. He added that another reason not to travel to Washington was that he did not want to be drawn into a fruitless discussion of Nagorno-Karabakh. He then proceeded to discuss, at some length, the recent meeting at Rambouillet.

[1](#)4. (C) Kocharian admitted he had had a sense even before heading for Paris that there really was nothing to discuss. He said he appreciated the efforts of the co-chairs and of President Chirac, with whom he said he had a good relationship, but he thought that all of them had worked themselves up into more of a frenzy than was warranted.

[1](#)5. (C) As an example, Kocharian described Chirac wringing his hands over problems that he reported President Aliyev had with the term "referendum." Kocharian told Chirac that that was Aliyev's problem, not his. If the Azerbaijan Constitution needed to be altered, there were only six oppositionists in the Majles, and it could be amended.

[1](#)6. (C) Kocharian related that he had gone into the one-on-one with President Aliyev with a basic question for him: "are you here to make an agreement, or are we just going to pretend to negotiate?" Note: the two presidents are evidently on familiar terms, "na ty."

[1](#)7. (C) Although he acceded to the French co-chair's entreaties to stay for the second day in Rambouillet, Kocharian said he thought it had been a waste of time. He saw no point in talks that went over the same ground time and again. While progress had been registered at Kazan, Kocharian now doubted whether President Aliyev was sincere about a settlement. On the one hand, he had been sending signals of flexibility to the co-chairs and others, yet he was forever making statements for domestic consumption about how "time was on Azerbaijan's side," and "our patience is not unlimited, etc." Were these the statements of someone who really wanted to conclude a settlement?

[1](#)8. (C) Kocharian said he thought Aliyev did not really know his own heart on the matter. He recalled that he had once known a man who was cheating egregiously on his wife, but at the same time, showering her with gifts because he had a bad conscience about his affair. In Kocharian's view, President Aliyev was similarly torn. Aliyev, he said, did not want to shoulder an iota of responsibility for a Karabakh settlement unless it was a total victory for Azerbaijan, although he (Aliyev) was in a much stronger position politically than he (Kocharian) was. Kocharian thought it was in Aliyev's character not to stick to agreements, and illustrated this step-forward, step-back behavior using his hands.

[1](#)9. (C) Returning to Rambouillet and the talks, Kocharian claimed that nearly all the material on the table at Paris had been proposed by the Armenian side one and one-half years ago, when the Prague process started. The Armenian position was clear and straight-forward, and if the other side wanted an agreement, it was still possible. The connection between Kelbajar and the referendum on Nagorno-Karabakh's future status was an entirely "normal" element to have in such an agreement. Whether the vote would take place in three years or five years could be discussed, but it seemed clear to

Kocharian that his Azeri counterpart was aiming at ensuring that there never would be such a vote.

¶10. (C) Asked about the recent call from President Putin, Kocharian confirmed that it had taken place on February 24. The Russian President had asked whether the Armenian position had changed. Kocharian explained the situation, and how, in his view, nothing had really changed. Kocharian said that Putin did not press for an urgent meeting.

¶11. (C) When the Ambassador ventured that just having a negotiating process underway was probably stabilizing, Kocharian did not disagree, but he did repeat that he saw no point in "pretending to negotiate." He added that if he and Aliyev had been able to reach a deal on the basis of Kazan, they would have immediately have gotten into talks about the details of what had to happen next -- and he suspected that at every turn there would have been attempts by President Aliyev to find new obstacles. Still, Kocharian did not rule out continuing the negotiating process at some point.

¶12. COMMENT: Kocharian is blunt and does not mince words. This characteristic was on display today, and we apologize to our gentle readers in Baku and Washington for not filtering this out. Although there may be a way to get the process restarted, it almost surely will require efforts by the foreign ministers. Kocharian is not, in our view, in any mood to return to the table right now. END COMMENT
EVANS